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ABSTRACT

This grant proposal describes Project GOLD (Garfield Options for Leadership Development), an after-school and summer program designed to serve African American middle school-aged youth in Richmond, Virginia. The youths are residents of public housing, are primarily from female-headed households, and are typically at least one school year behind their age mates. Program components include: a 6-week summer program to be held at Virginia Commonwealth University, an after-school enrichment program, and a parent education and support program. The program reflects the collaborative efforts of the Department of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, the Garfield Childs Memorial Fund Tutorial Program, and private, community, and state agencies, in an attempt to provide new and challenging opportunities for youth and their parents who reside in high risk environments. The program is based on the conceptual framework of the Athletes Coaching Teens program, which uses a life span developmental model, emphasizes prevention of problem behaviors, and focuses on teaching new skills for living. (JDD)

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PROJECT GOLD
(GARFIELD OPTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT)

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

PROJECT GOLD

Abstract for Proposal submitted to the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention

This proposal reflects the collaborative efforts of the Department of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, the Garfield Childs Memorial Fund Tutorial Program, and numerous private, community and state agencies to provide new and challenging opportunities for youth and their parents who reside in high risk environments. Within Richmond, both parental reports and research findings show that middle school age youth begin involvement with high risk behaviors and interest in school declines. At this time, few or no structured programs are available to this age group during the after-school hours or in the summer. Project GOLD (Garfield Options for Leadership Development) fills a glaring void for youth in this community.

Project GOLD will serve African American middle school students between 6th and 8th grades. Over 78% of these youths reside in female-headed households. All participants will be residents of public housing. The average yearly income per household is $4,391. The youths from these communities who enroll in the GFCMF elementary tutorial program are typically at least one school year behind their age mates.

Project GOLD consists of three program components for youths and their parents: a 6-week summer program to be held at Virginia Commonwealth University; an expanded and modified after-school enrichment program; and an expanded parent education and support program. A primary objective of the grant proposal is to develop a model enrichment program for families in low-income housing communities. Therefore, an extensive process and outcome evaluation will be conducted at all levels of the project. In subsequent years of the grant, efforts will be made to disseminate the model to other communities through staff training and consultations.

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NARRATIVE

A. SPECIFIC AIMS

1. To adapt and expand a school-based prevention program for middle school age youth, that was developed as an OSAP demonstration grant, into a comprehensive community based youth and parent program entitled Project GOLD (Garfield Options for Leadership Development). This project utilizes a competency-based conceptual framework derived from a life span developmental and critical life events model.

2. To develop and implement a 6-week summer program to be held at Virginia Commonwealth University for disadvantaged middle school age youth who reside in an urban subsidized housing community. This program will serve 50 youth in the first year and will increase in number in subsequent years.

3. To expand and modify an after-school enrichment program to be developmentally and culturally appropriate for disadvantaged middle school aged youths. The program will be offered within the targeted communities and will contain a strong emphasis on academic tutoring.

4. To expand and modify a parent support and education program for parents whose children participate in the summer and after-school enrichment programs. This program will involve extensive outreach to parents in the community and will provide a variety of structured activities developed to meet the parents needs as enumerated by the parent planning group.

5. To evaluate the effectiveness of Project GOLD in meeting its program objectives which are to prevent health-compromising behaviors in youth such as alcohol and other drug use, unsafe sexual activity, delinquency, and school problems; and to increase the occurrences of health-enhancing behaviors.

6. To disseminate Project GOLD to other urban subsidized housing communities within the city and state. The Project GOLD staff will develop a program manual and training protocol to assist additional sites in replicating the programs for their communities and serve as consultant to these sites.

In sum, this proposal reflects the collaborative efforts of the Department of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, the Garfield Childs Memorial Fund Tutorial Program, and numerous private, community and state agencies to provide new and challenging opportunities for youth and their parents who reside in high risk environments. Within Richmond, both parental reports and research findings show that middle school age youth begin involvement with high risk behaviors and interest in school declines. At this time few or no structured programs are available to this age group during the after-school hours or in the summer. The proposed program fills a glaring void for youth in this community.

B. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Garfield Options for Leadership Development or Project GOLD is a multi-level prevention program designed to provide opportunities and challenges for low-income families in crime-invested neighborhoods within Richmond Virginia. Project GOLD is a direct outgrowth of a meeting of the Richmond CADRES (Commonwealth Alliance for Drug Rehabilitation and Education) with a group of mothers from two low-income housing communities who came to express their concerns for their families. They talked of the violence their children witnessed on a regular basis, the drug dealings around their apartments, the problems of managing children when they are the sole providers, and the difficulties of keeping children interested in school and away from drugs and pregnancy. These women were motivated to improve their conditions and were seeking assistance from those who would work with them.

As a result of this meeting, the two co-directors of this grant, one a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and the other, the Executive Director of the Garfield F. Childs Memorial Fund Tutorial Program, have pulled together the support of community and university officials, local business representatives, and leaders in various branches of state government to tackle the concerns of these mothers with a creative program. Two messages were most apparent from these discussions: youths need safe and challenging opportunities during the after-school hours; and parents need a forum to organize their community and to gain skills and information for enhancing their own lives.

The concerns of the mothers in Richmond are not unlike those expressed in other parts of the country, especially when it centers around the need for child care during after-school hours and summer days when nominal adult supervision is available. Latchkey children or children in self-care has become a growing national concern. Studies indicate associations between self-care arrangements and substance use (Richardson, et al., 1989); susceptibility to peer pressure (Steinberg, 1986); and involvement in problem behaviors and deviant peer activities (Galambos & Maggs, 1989; Montemayor & Clayton, 1983).

In a recent study of middle school students in Richmond, students in self-care more than 10 times a month reported significantly higher rates of problem behaviors than supervised students. Self-care students were more likely to: use alcohol and other drugs, smoke cigarettes, feel pressured by friends to use alcohol and other drugs, perceive same aged peers as using alcohol and other drugs, and engage in problem behaviors such as skipping school. As supervision decreased, engagement in negative behaviors increased.

The research on the effects of after-school programs is in its early stages, particularly for middle school age youths. The primary challenge for educators and community providers is to establish a developmentally appropriate after-school program for the population to be served, not just a "baby-sitting" service (Coleman, Rowland, & Robinson, 1989). Based on her review of the literature, Lipsitz (1986) has made three observations about the possible contributions of after-school programs. First, programs can promote healthy development as well as limit risk factors. Second, these programs can provide opportunities that youths would not otherwise experience. Third,

after-school programs reduce risk to youths simply by keeping them off the streets. There are several potential beneficial effects of after-school programs on families and the workplace, like reducing parental guilt, increasing work satisafction, and reducing downtime on the job caused by the "3:00 syndrone" (Lipsitz, 1986).

The concerned parents in Gilpin and Whitcomb Courts also expressed a genuine interest in helping themselves. The need for prevention programs to include parents has been a key element in successful prevention efforts. Lisbeth Schorr (1988) has stressed that programs must serve children in the context of the family and families in the context of their surroundings. The William T. Grant Foundation (1988) clearly specified recommendations for parent education and the enhancement of parent involvement in their children's schools and community. Community support services can help families build open and respectful communication between parents and adolescents.

The co-director from VCU has been involved for the past two years with a school-based substance abuse prevention program for middle school students. Athletes Coaching Teens (ACT) is a demonstration grant funded by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention. While the program has been extremely successful, the limitations of a short-term program are obvious. For a program to make an impact on the lives of high risk youths, it must be in the community, involve parents, and provide multiple services (Bond & Wagner, 1988; Schorr, 1988). Project GOLD is an attempt to integrate the conceptual framework of the ACT program with the African-American perspective of the Garfield F. Childs Memorial Fund Tutorial Program (referred to as GFCMF).

The conceptual framework of the ACT program is built upon several premises. First, the program is based on a life span developmental model of intervention. In this model the focus is on enhancing individuals or groups so that their encounters with future events provide opportunities for growth (Danish, Smyer, & Nowak, 1980). A major assumption of the developmental approach is its emphasis on continuous growth and change. Over time, individuals encounter a sequence of life events. These events may involve a transition into new roles and responsibilities, biological changes, or physical relocation. Life events provide the opportunity for individual growth as well as problems. The optimization of these growth opportunities is the objective of the life span developmental model (Danish & D'Augelli, 1980). Life Development Intervention involves preparation for upcoming life events so that individuals can successfully manage and grow from the events. This strategy empowers individuals to take control of their current situation and feel confident about their future.

Middle school age youths are in a developmental stage in which they experience a number of concurrent life events: biological changes with the onset of puberty; physical relocation from elementary school to middle school; and reference change from child to teenager. These changes provide unique challenges and stresses for the adolescent.

In addition to developmental changes in adolescents, Cheryl Perry and Richard Jessor (1985) emphasize that an adolescent's well-being encompasses four domains of health: physical health, psychological health, social health and personal health. Within each of these domains, adolescents may engage in

health-compromising behaviors, that is, behaviors that threaten the well-being of the individual. They may also engage in health-enhancing behaviors, those behaviors that tend to improve oneself. For example, the social health of adolescents may involve the health-compromising influence of negative peer pressure to use drugs, or the health-enhancing ability to develop positive social support to learn a new skill.

Second, alcohol and other drug use is one of a number of health-compromising behaviors, such as drinking and driving, engaging in unsafe sexual activity, smoking, eating incorrectly, experiencing too much life stress, not being able to manage anger, and even dropping out of school (Jessor, 1982). Researchers have found that individuals who have a problem in one of these areas are likely to experience problems in several other areas. What results is the development of a "lifestyle syndrome" which must be attacked to prevent these behaviors from occurring. Trying to focus on problem behaviors one at a time is likely to be ineffective and time consuming.

A third premise is that if we are to change lifestyle behaviors, we must emphasize teaching students new skills for living and provide opportunities for them to explore and develop these skills. The specific skills to be taught are determined by the underlying causes of health-compromising behaviors. Researchers (Johnston & O'Malley, 1986; Newcomb & Bentler, 1988) who have studied drug use among adolescents for over a decade have identified several reasons why adolescents use alcohol and other drugs: a social-recreational factor ("to be part of the group" and "getting high with friends"); a factor related to coping with negative affect ("getting away from problems and frustrations" or "to relax and relieve tensions"). In the evaluation associated with the ACT project, a third factor related to a lack of optimism about the future has been a significant predictor of many health-compromising behaviors (Mash, Danish & Farrell, In preparation). These three factors indicate that individual differences exist in the reasons adolescents engage in health-compromising behaviors and in turn, diverse approaches to prevention must be provided within a program if it is to be successful.

GFCMF has developed a very strong community-based program for elementary age children and their parents. This program adheres to a strong commitment of empowering the residents of the community to address their own needs. The children served by GFCMF are victims of unhealthy environments and oppressive economic and societal conditions. To counter these forces, the staff of GFCMF have utilized non-traditional methods for teaching academic skills and self-development appropriate for them (Akbar, 1985; Children Defense Fund, 1985; Comer, 1988; Kohl, 1982)

Keeping with the grassroots nature of GFCMF and the evolvement of this proposal, a door-to-door survey was conducted to determine whether parents with children in middle school felt that an after-school or summer program was needed in their community. Fifty six families were randomly selected from the populations of the two housing developments which GFCMF serves. These fifteen families represented twenty-seven middle school aged children. Parents of twenty children indicated that they would enroll their children in an after-school and a summer program.

Parents reported that they were interested in an after-school and summer program that would offer activities such as tutoring, homework assistance, drug education, Black awareness/history, managing conflicts without violence, relationship skills, sexuality education and self care skills. For themselves, parents were interested in a parent support group, and participating in workshops on reaching personal goals, improving parenting skills and preventing alcohol and other drug use and teenage pregnancy.

An obvious need exists for safe and challenging opportunities for middle school age youth and their families in the neighborhoods targeted for this project. Given the brief time allotted for conducting the surveys, the genuine assumption is that families within the community would eagerly participate in the proposed programs. The experiences of the co-directors and the perspectives of their respective programs lend themselves to the creation of a unique prevention program for low-income housing communities.

C. TARGET POPULATION

An increasing proportion of Richmond's children and youth grow up in poverty-level and low-income households. Approximately 35% of children live in a household with an income level below the poverty level. The proportion of children living in single parent households has increased dramatically. Approxmately 46% of Richmond families with children are headed by a single parent compared to the national average of 18%. The majority of these households are headed by women and 65% of Richmond women with school age children are active in the labor force. The majority of children must be cared for by someone other than a parent for at least part of the day (Youth Population/Delinquency Study, 1986). This report led to strong recommendations to increase public awareness on the potential negative impact of the lack of quality care for children and to support efforts to increase the number of quality care settings (Comprehensive Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Plan, 1989).

The trends for inner city families in poverty are not encouraging. Currently one in five children live in a single parent household and below the poverty level; by the year 2000, the ratio will increase to one in four children. By the year 2000 the number of children held by law enforcement officials will increase by 56% (Breaking the Cycle of Poverty, 1987; Edelman, 1987).

One minority student drops out of school for every two who graduate. A minority child is 3 times as likely as a white child to be physically disciplined in school, suspended, expelled or made to repeat a grade. In addition, a minority child is three times as likely as a white child to end up in vocational education or in class for the mildly mentally handicapped.

Close to 34 percent of all black youth have inadequate reading skills (defined as the ability to search for specific information, interrelate ideas, make generalizations about literature, science and social studies materials). Much of this failure can be attributed to poor study habits ("The Status of Black Children, 1989"). Four in every 10 minority girls are pregnant before they reach 20 (Horn, 1987). The City of Richmond Health Department indicates

that teen pregnancies (females 18 and under) represent 18.1% of total pregnancies in the city.

The communities targeted for this grant, Gilpin and Whitcomb Courts, have been identified as primary locations for crime and drug-related incidents. According to the Richmond Youth Commission Delinquency Study (1986), Gilpin Court had the highest frequency of resident youth arrests of the 69 census tracts within the city. 151 youths between the ages of 10 and 17 were arrested, a 788% increase between 1980 and 1986. Whitcomb Court also experienced a significant increase in youth arrests, an increase of 163% from 1980 to 1986. Gilpin and Whitcomb Courts also ranked among the highest census tracts for crime victimizations for youth.

Results of the 1988 NIDA National Household Survey on Drug Abuse showed that the estimated number of Americans using any illegal drug on a current basis had dropped 37% since 1985. While so-called casual drug use may have dropped, cocaine use rose by 33% among people taking the drug at least once per week. The rise was most noticeable among the most vulnerable, high risk youth living in impoverished urban areas. Another report revealed that while illicit drug use may be decreasing among high school students, the rates of alcohol use has continued to increase (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1989).